

THE LAST POST

Written by

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Episode One

Pink Revisions

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Bonafide Films

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The Forge Entertainment

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An RAF VC10 banks and turns on its final approach into Aden. The newly married HONOR Martin thrilled by what she sees out the window - sun, desert, mountains, sea, beach, port. The no smoking light comes on. Her husband JOE doesn't extinguish his cigarette - he'll do it in his own time.

HONOR

I could learn to smoke if you like?

He doesn't say anything.

HONOR (CONT'D)

You could teach me..

JOE

You're perfect as you are, Mrs Martin.

She remembers something - and takes a pair of white gloves out of her hand bag and puts them on.

HONOR

For the sun - mother says.

She sits up straighter for landing. A tilt of the wing - the sea out of the window.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Will there be sharks?

JOE

Yes. (A beat) And jellyfish.. And dangerous men.

She looks at him to check he's joking. He's not. He's deadpan serious. But then after a few moments there's a trace of a smile on his face and she sees that he's teasing her.. (He is and he isn't - there will be all three: sharks, jellyfish and dangerous men). He stubs out his cigarette and takes her hand.

HONOR

I'm so excited I feel I could land the plane.

She hooks her arm in his.

HONOR (CONT'D)

It's a big adventure, isn't it Joe?

JOE

Marriage or Aden?

HONOR

All of it. Everything.

He fastens his seat-belt and looks straight ahead, his thoughts on the challenges in front of him and the secret he's leaving behind as the flaps on the wings lift and the jet engines put in some more effort.

2 EXT. RAF BASE. KHORMAKSAR. DAY.

2

HONOR and JOE standing in front of a large Nissan hut which passes for the terminal. Busy. The VC10 is the weekly flight from RAF Brize Norton. The heat is profound, the sun amazing. The transport for CAPTAIN JOE MARTIN and his new wife HONOR hasn't arrived. A BOAC billboard (blue lettering on a plain white background) is behind them. It looks as though they've just stepped out of it. They're a handsome pair. Both are wearing the clothes they put on twenty three hours ago in a damp dawn in deepest Hampshire. The Jackie Kennedy suit Honor is wearing (far too much wool for Aden) gives her a whiff of glamour to go with her own and her husband's good looks. White gloves. JOE puts two small suitcases down, an unwanted admission (three weeks into marriage he really wants his wife to be impressed all of the time) that the Royal Military Police are not here to sweep them from jet plane to married quarters and their new life policing the British Empire in its hour of need. Behind them the baggage truck delivers luggage to waiting SERVICEMEN and WOMEN at the corner of the terminal hut. FIRST ARAB MAN (one of two baggage handlers) is looking over at JOE and HONOR as he unloads the bags from the truck. JOE puts his sunglasses on. HONOR registers this and, without wanting him to see she's copying him, copies him.

3 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. BEDROOM. BASE. DAY.

3

Lieutenant ED LAITHWAITE sitting on the edge of the bed in uniform staring at his pistol like he hates it. He picks it up and looks at it. He turns and points it at the mirror in the wardrobe door. His hand shaking a little. His POV of himself pointing a pistol at himself.

4 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. KITCHEN. DAY.

4

ALISON LAITHWAITE in a half open silk dressing gown cutting a grapefruit in half with a big knife. ED comes in. He stands and looks at her. His pistol in his hand. Her knife in her hand. She knows he's there. She doesn't turn round. He shifts his weight.

ED

Alison..

She halts whatever he's going to say before he says it:

ALISON

Have a good day at the office,
dear.

This is what she does, she plays around on the edge of remarks like this. She hasn't turned. She starts digging out grapefruit segments with the knife. He goes. She opens a gin bottle and pours a big slop on her half grapefruit.

5 EXT. RMP BASE. DAY.

5

An egg is split onto the bonnet of a Military Police Land Rover. Two big white letters emblazoned on the bonnet: MP. Higher up the bonnet twelve slices of bread lined up in two rows of six waiting to receive fried eggs to make the sandwiches that SERGEANT ALEX BAXTER (good height, big heart) is making for: *

6 EXT. BASE - CONTINUOUS

6

A group of soldiers in uniform. CORPORAL ISRAEL ORCHOVER, LANCE CORPORAL TONY ARMSTRONG and LANCE CORPORAL PAUL STONEHAM sit in a circle on upturned boxes looking at four upturned beer crates each of which has a playing card on it. The Ace of Spades, the King of Diamonds, the Queen of Hearts and the Jack of Clubs. CAPTAIN NICK PAGE is the only officer involved. He's at ease with his men, the ease that comes from mutual respect. Matchsticks are being placed (after much thought and with real care) on each card. Some kind of betting game but unclear how it works because, bets placed, the men just sit looking intently at the cards. The sizzle of frying eggs. STONEHAM is the youngest and he's finding it hard to hide his excitement. Most of the men are shirtless. Fifty yards away Corporal Chris DIMARCO doing press ups in the sun. He's phenomenally fit. The press ups go on and on and just when you think he can't do any more he switches to one arm press ups. Being phenomenally fit is his reason for being. There's a stone placed in the small of his back just to make it tougher. ED approaches, then stops and stands slightly apart from the group. BAXTER glances over at him. BAXTER is hard and hewn, possibly 40, difficult to tell. A proper man. ED approaches the cell end of the guard room building. The sound of a generator being switched on in the guard room. Then White Christmas, Bing Crosby. ED can hear this; none of the other men can. *

7 INT. MARKHAM'S OFFICE / GUARD ROOM. DAY.

7

Major HARRY MARKHAM looks up. He's seated at the desk in the office section of the guardroom. The door into the building opens directly into the office. At the other end of the office is a door into a corridor off which are two cells. MARKHAM listening intently to the sounds from the cells. He doesn't like what's happening, but he's not doing anything about it. Three men come out - none in uniform. Two put their jackets back on as they leave the cell; the third is Harvey TILBROOK. He doesn't have a jacket.

His sleeves are rolled up high. He stands and - taking his time and taking care - unrolls his sleeves down to the elbow. MARKHAM watches. TILBROOK watches MARKHAM watch him. TILBROOK and the two MEN leave. MARKHAM alone with his conscience. White Christmas ends and then starts again. MARKHAM goes after Tilbrook.

8 EXT. GUARD ROOM. DAY.

8

MARKHAM comes out. TILBROOK and the two MEN in a civilian saloon car with a DRIVER, engine started, ready to go. MARKHAM goes over to the jeep. He wants to say something but before he can:

*
*

TILBROOK
Not a mark on him.

The men look on at the jeep driving away and their commanding officer watching it go. ED looks into the cell through a slit window. His POV of an Arab PRISONER in stress position, fingertips against the wall, up on tiptoes, knees bent a little. He's hooded and he's hot. ED looks over at the men.

*

9 INT. GUARD ROOM. DAY.

9

Close up on PRISONER in intense discomfort in intense heat with Bing crooning and the white noise from the generator messing with his head. ED comes in quiet as a desert rat. The PRISONER knows someone else has come into the room and it's a worry. Up very close with his breathing inside the hood.

10 EXT. RAF BASE. DAY.

10

HONOR and JOE waiting in the heat. Fewer people around now. Plastic Christmas trees (freight from the plane) being loaded onto the back of an open truck. JOE shifts his weight.

The last delivery from the plane of baggage. The remaining SERVICEMEN collect their luggage. JOE turns and catches the eye of the FIRST ARAB MAN. SECOND ARAB MAN (baggage handler) says something to FIRST ARAB MAN which sounds like impatience. FIRST ARAB MAN gets into baggage truck and parks it up by the side of the terminal. The Christmas tree truck goes. JOE conscious that they're the last to be picked up. Even the Christmas trees have gone.. He smiles some manufactured reassurance at his new wife and she smiles back. The FIRST ARAB MAN by the side of the terminal looking at HONOR. He's jumpy. He wants to do something - unclear what - and he doesn't want anyone to see it. Are Joe and Honor in danger?

JOE
It might be cooler inside,
darling...

She shakes her head - she's happier out here.

HONOR

I love it when you call me darling.
I don't think I'll ever get used to
it.

JOE

This isn't Aldershot, is it?

HONOR

I can't tell you how happy that
makes me.

SECOND ARAB MAN walks around the baggage truck to the driver side door. He opens the door and leans in. He takes something (we don't see what) from the glove compartment and conceals it within his clothing. FIRST ARAB MAN looks at what SECOND ARAB MAN is doing then looks back at the English couple. This could be it - his moment. He really wants to find the courage to do something. SECOND ARAB MAN, coming back round the truck, calls out an instruction and the moment passes.

11 INT. GUARD ROOM. DAY.

11

PRISONER trying to control rising panic brought on by Ed's silent presence. His breathing inside the hood. Sweat patches under his arms. ED moves in much closer to him. He looks back at the door. Nobody there.

12 EXT. BASE. DAY.

12

A fly buzzing. The stillness of the men intensifies. This is it. Nobody moves. Dual focus on the fly and on the four cards. Finally, the fly lands on the Queen of Hearts. Big reaction. The game is over. Nick has won. Back slapping all round. BAXTER oversees the handing over of winnings to NICK.

13 INT. GUARD ROOM. DAY.

13

ED stops the tape playing and then turns the generator off. PRISONER made super anxious by not knowing what ED is doing and by the silence. ED approaches the PRISONER. ED puts his hands on his shoulders - what's he doing? The PRISONER stops breathing. ED presses down on his shoulders with both hands so the prisoner is not on tiptoes anymore. Profound physical relief mixed with real fear. Slowly, slowly the PRISONER dares to straighten up his knees. MARKHAM in the doorway (unseen by ED). ED removes the hood.

MARKHAM

What are you doing?

ED

Using my imagination.

MARKHAM

Well don't. There are rules.

ED

Usually rules are written down. Not these ones. Why not, sir?

MARKHAM

Ed..

ED

Repetitive and constant noise, no sleep, no food, stand against a wall on tip toe with knees bent. Blind. Seventy two hours of stress and everyone talks - that's the theory.

MARKHAM

You don't think it works..

ED

I think torture is the best recruiting sergeant for terrorists. When are the intelligence boys coming back?

MARKHAM

They didn't say.

ED

So he's our prisoner, sir. In their absence..

ED hands MARKHAM the hood and responsibility for whether it goes back on or not. ED leaves. The PRISONER looks at MARKHAM. MARKHAM looks at the hood. He moves over to the PRISONER. The PRISONER lowers his head a little. MARKHAM in an agony of indecision. Finally, he does what he's supposed to do and puts the hood back on.

14

EXT. BASE. DAY.

14

Here come the fried eggs. ORCHOVER handing them out. ED joins the men.

NICK

You fixed it for me.

BAXTER

No, sir.

NICK

I know you better than any soldier I've ever served with - and you fixed it for me to win.

BAXTER

How would I do that, sir? A pet fly
that understands English?

NICK picks up the Queen of Hearts and examines it. Nothing.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

An officer needs three things -
judgement, authority.. and luck.
You've got all three, sir.

NICK smiles and goes. BAXTER turns back to the men.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

I farted on her.

STONEHAM

What?

BAXTER

He always puts his money on the
Queen of Hearts. I farted on her
before the game; the fly was always
going to choose her.

Laughter. ED peels away. BAXTER goes after him.

*

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Can I ask where you're going, sir?

ED stops and looks at him without answering.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Off base?

ED

Doing my job.

BAXTER

It's basic military police practice
that we know where you are, sir.

ED goes, ignoring Baxter. STONEHAM takes a big bite of his
fried egg sandwich and egg yoke spills onto his trousers. He
tries to wipe it and the egg smears and spreads.

ORCHOVER

Let it dry then it flakes off.

STONEHAM grateful. NICK collects two fried egg sandwiches
from the Land Rover and joins BAXTER. He gives him his fried
egg sandwich.

BAXTER

We'll miss you, sir.

They watch ED walk away.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Laithwaite is.. what's the word?

NICK

Are you about to criticize an officer in the presence and hearing of another officer, Baxter?

BAXTER

The British army is the best in the world because you trust the man standing next to you.

15 EXT. MARRIED QUARTERS. BASE. DAY.

15

ALISON, sleeveless white dress, brown arms, pegging a white bra to the makeshift washing line outside her door, next to a row of grey socks. She goes inside.

15A EXT. MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY.

15A

NICK walking towards married quarters. NICK sees the bra - a sign intended for him: husband not at home. NICK hasn't seen MARKHAM approaching and he's almost caught with the wrong kind of smile on his face.

MARKHAM

Taking a last look round?

NICK shifts his knowing and amorous smile into something more straightforward.

NICK

An officer's wife hanging a bra out to dry. What's the world coming to?

16 EXT. DOCKS. DAY.

16

ED driving a duck egg blue Fiat 850. He parks. Nobody around. He starts to pull off his uniform. Why? What is this?

17 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

17

NICK and ALISON fucking. The ceiling fan at full belt. It's rotating so fast the rotation is wonky.

NICK

We said we wouldn't.

She pulls him onto her, her fingers and nails deep in his back. Almost angry in her need for this. The fan starts clicking as it rotates. It might come off the ceiling.

18

EXT. DOCKS. DAY.

18

ED (in Arab clothes) sits with his INFORMANT. Dockers and other port workers all Arab. The INFORMANT is smoking.

INFORMANT

Egyptian ship under a Moroccan flag. The biggest shipment of arms into Aden yet.

ED

When?

INFORMANT

Unloaded last night. Land mines left the docks at dawn. Small arms and grenades are leaving as we speak.

ED

Thank you.

ED stands up - this is priceless information and he needs to act now.

ED (CONT'D)

Where can I find a phone?

INFORMANT stubs out his cigarette..

INFORMANT

I want you to let it happen.

ED looks at him. A big moment.

ED

That's impossible.

INFORMANT

The NLF are new, they're angry and they have a brilliant young leader who will do anything to get rid of the British oppressor.

ED

So why would we let them have a shipment of weapons?

INFORMANT

Because you need them to trust me. If I bring in these weapons - I'm trusted.

ED

I don't think I can do that.

INFORMANT

What did you say when we first
met?(Arabic) **Al-hoorroob tuksab bil**
kadeaah, mush bil banadik.
[Wars are won by deception not
guns.]

*
*
*
*

ED

Wars are won by deception not guns.

INFORMANT smiles.

ED (CONT'D)

(Arabic)**Laish mubtasim?**
[Why are you smiling?]

INFORMANT

They're British weapons left behind
after Suez.

ED

We're supplying the weapons and the
targets. The British Empire is
eating itself and we're not even
making money out of it.

INFORMANT

One thing in the shipment that
isn't British. A Blindicide
Bazouka. Belgian.

ED

(Impressed) They're serious.

INFORMANT

So you'll turn a blind eye?

ED deciding. A big decision..

ED

I'd want something in exchange.
Your NLF man - can you give me a
name?

INFORMANT

Better than that..

He shows ED a photograph of:

INFORMANT (CONT'D)

Kadir Hakim. What's the expression
you have? Putting on a show. He
wants to put on a show to announce
himself.

ED

What kind of a show?

INFORMANT

He sees you as a symbol of the occupation. Those are his words.

ED

Who? Who does he mean?

INFORMANT

Maybe it's the red caps you wear.

It sinks in. The RMP are a specific target.

ED

(In Arabic) **Shookran.**

[Thank you.]

The deal done, business over..

INFORMANT

How is your wife?

ED swerves the subject.

ED

She's fine. Your English is getting better.

INFORMANT

Thank you.

ED

I don't like it. You might say something in your sleep.

INFORMANT

Give me your hands.

ED holds his hands out. A beat.

INFORMANT (CONT'D)

You're making a mistake.

INFORMANT refolds the bottom of the sleeves of ED's garb so that the folds are tucked inwards rather than out.

INFORMANT (CONT'D)

This way the sand doesn't get into the fold. Every Arab man knows this.

A beat. ED back to Kadir Hakim's show..

ED

Kadir Hakim's show..

INFORMANT

Soon. The man you have as your prisoner..

ED lets the silence lengthen.

INFORMANT (CONT'D)

He knows. You don't have long..

18A EXT. ROAD. TURN OFF TO VILLAGE. DAY.

18A

A local truck drives along the main road. It slows and takes the turn off to a nearby village.

19 EXT. BASE. DAY.

19

ARMSTRONG studying an Arab phrase book and dictionary. He's placed himself in the hope and expectation of: YUSRA, a young Adeni woman walking past heading for the married quarters and the Markham house where she works as "the help". ARMSTRONG spots her. ARMSTRONG trying and failing to find the courage to go after YUSRA and talk to her. She looks at him and smiles and this gives him the courage to approach her.

ARMSTRONG

(In Arabic) **Ahlan, kaif haalak,
anna kuaice, issmi al-areef
Armstrong. Tony.**

*[Hello. How are you? I am fine. My
name is Corporal Armstrong. Tony.]*

YUSRA amused by this then touched and serious.

YUSRA

Tony. Yusra.

ARMSTRONG

Yusra.

YUSRA smiles and goes. ARMSTRONG hopelessly in love and trying hard to hide it.

Bing Crosby faintly audible in the background. ARMSTRONG rejoins the men who are in a tight group apart from DIMARCO who is doing shuttle runs out in the heat of the day. ORCHOVER and STONEHAM watch DIMARCO.

*

ORCHOVER

He wanted to be in the Paras.

STONEHAM

Why isn't he?

ORCHOVER

After the first four days of selection he was top of everything. Fittest, sharpest, best shot..

STONEHAM

What happened?

ORCHOVER

He couldn't jump.

STONEHAM

He couldn't jump out the plane?

ORCHOVER

He couldn't jump off the wooden box
in the gym. Frightened of heights.

BAXTER joins them. BAXTER has something to show them. He's opening his pack and getting out a small drum..

BAXTER

I don't know what the locals call
it.

ARMSTRONG

Mirwas, sir. Tight skin, small,
hairy.

STONEHAM

Why would Captain Page want a drum?

ARMSTRONG

To remind him of your lovely
bollocks, Stoneham.

DIMARCO joins them. BAXTER hands it to DIMARCO to look at.

BAXTER

He'll get a regimental plaque for
the wall - they all get that; the
good ones get a heavy piss up in
the Sergeants Mess and the very
best? The one's you'd die for? They
get something that means something.
It doesn't matter what it is - it's
the fact of giving it.

ORCHOVER

Best officer I've served under in
twenty years.

STONEHAM nods solemnly. He worships Orchover and takes what he says very seriously.

BAXTER

Year and a half and we're all still
standing..

DIMARCO riffs on the drum with his fingers - punctuation to close and underline what Baxter has been saying.

DIMARCO

The new man. What do you know about him, Sarge?

*

BAXTER

I know his driver's late.

He looks at ARMSTRONG. The penny drops. ARMSTRONG rushes off. STONEHAM has a shot at being one of the boys:

STONEHAM

So a piss up in the Sergeants Mess, Sarge..

*

BAXTER

Not for you, Stoneham. You're baby-sitting for the CO's boy.

STONEHAM's disappointment.

DIMARCO

What's the answer to my question?

ORCHOVER knows and answers for Baxter.

ORCHOVER

Short service commission which means he didn't go to Sandhurst. They're usually running away from something...

DIMARCO

No dirt on his boots and a secret history.

STONEHAM looks really worried.

20

EXT. RAF BASE. DAY.

20

HONOR unfurls a black umbrella. A drop or two of rain still in its folds.

HONOR

Look. They came with us. Raindrops from England.

She puts the umbrella up against the sun and the last drops of England shine for a moment in the sun as they run down the umbrella and drop into the sand.

HONOR (CONT'D)

Come under the umbrella, Joe.

JOE

I'm fine.

The terminal behind JOE and HONOR deserted now. SECOND ARAB MAN positions himself at the front of the baggage truck so that he's out of view. He takes the secreted object out from inside his clothing. A grenade. It's a grenade. He looks at it, gathering himself for what he's about to do.

HONOR takes Joe's arm which means he's under the umbrella. He allows this, even though it's not quite right (what if the driver appears and she's touching him?)

HONOR

Tell me something I don't know
about my new husband.

JOE laughs but he's uneasy about this.

JOE

Like what?

HONOR

Anything.

JOE

I'm just as you see me.

Oh no he isn't. It's clear in the abruptness of what he's just said. He kisses her to smooth over the bump.

HONOR

What if they've forgotten us?

JOE

(Almost angry) They'll be here.

HONOR

What if night comes and it's just
you and me and the desert and the
stars?

SECOND ARAB MAN taking several deep breaths. Behind JOE and HONOR FIRST ARAB MAN approaching - JOE feels him coming. He doesn't turn round. HONOR, taking her cue from him, doesn't look round either. Her arm in his. FIRST ARAB MAN is sweating and nervous. He's trying to tell them something. It's important. He keeps checking over his shoulder. HONOR and JOE have no idea what he's saying - it could be anything.

FIRST ARAB MAN

(Arabic) **Intabeh, arguuk intabeh.**
[Be careful. Please be careful.]

HONOR

What's he saying?

FIRST ARAB MAN repeating with urgency, voice lowered, not wanting to be overheard. HONOR repeats the last Arabic sentence. SECOND ARAB MAN coming, his hands held together in front of him holding the (hidden) grenade.

He hears HONOR speak the Arabic sentence and that FIRST ARAB MAN is right next to him.

SECOND ARAB MAN
(Arabic) **Taharaku, taharaku, ab ido anhom.**
[Move. Move! Get away from them.]

FIRST ARAB MAN refuses to budge. Sweating and super nervous now. His presence next to Joe and Honor is what's keeping them alive - stopping the grenade being thrown. JOE and HONOR have no idea what's going on. SECOND ARAB MAN joins his colleague and stares at him. FIRST ARAB man doesn't budge.

HONOR
I'm scared.

JOE
Don't be.

HONOR
I like it. *[Being scared]*

A truck with an RAF man driving pulls up. The driver gets out to unload something from the back. The moment has passed. Honor and Joe have been seconds away from death and never known it. The two ARAB MEN walk off together. SECOND ARAB MAN animated and angry.

21 EXT. ROAD. DAY. 21

ARMSTRONG driving fast. He looks at his watch.

22 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. KITCHEN. DAY. 22

NICK comes in buttoning up his shirt. ALISON in her silk dressing gown loosely tied. He takes a sprig of heather from his trouser pocket.

NICK
From the hillside above Ballinluig.
It's seen me through. You have it now.

He puts the heather on the side.

NICK (CONT'D)
They're getting me a drum.

ALISON
How do you know?

She pours herself a big gin. And then makes it bigger.

NICK

A good officer knows everything his
men are doing.

She opens the freezer compartment.

ALISON

Why didn't Ed get it? The
promotion?

NICK

Don't know.

There are no ice cubes in the freezer.

ALISON

Nothing to do with me?

NICK

No.

ALISON

So you do know.

She picks up a sharp knife.

NICK

Your husband is a good officer.

ALISON

So it must be me.

She hacks at the ice stuck to the top and sides of the
freezer section with the knife. A chunk of ice breaks off.
It's too big to fit in her glass..

ALISON (CONT'D)

What am I going to do without you?

NICK

I think you should put some effort
into being Mrs Laithwaite.

She stops.

NICK (CONT'D)

And maybe a bit less of that..

He looks at her drink.

ALISON

Don't do that. Not now - so late in
the bloody day.

She tries to jam the ice in, the glass cracks, her thumb is
cut. Blood.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Can we? One more time? Please.

She puts a record on. Ketty Lester Love Letters. She leans in very close to him as they dance. Her hand and her cheek on his chest next to his heart.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Promise me you'll be safe.

NICK

I can't do that.

ALISON

Promise me anyway.

NICK

I promise.

23 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY. 23

The local truck arriving. VILLAGERS being ushered into their dwellings by INSURGENTS. INSURGENTS unloading a crate.

24 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY. 24

INSURGENTS open the crate. A whole range of weapons including the Belgian Blindicide bazouka.

25 EXT. ROAD. DAY. 25

ARMSTRONG driving. He looks at his watch. He's really late. Foot down. Bumpy road. Foot down despite the bumps.

26 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY. 26

INSURGENTS unpacking weapons. INSURGENT sentries with rifles outside. The two ARAB MEN from the RAF base approaching on bicycles. A group of INSURGENTS go towards them. The men stop. The INSURGENTS speak with the SECOND ARAB MAN, who says something and points at the FIRST ARAB MAN. The INSURGENTS shove the FIRST MAN to the ground and make sure he stays there. It doesn't look good for him. A shout. A man approaches. This is KADIR HAKIM. He has natural authority. The INSURGENTS back away from the FIRST ARAB MAN who looks up at KADIR HAKIM. KADIR HAKIM stands and looks at the FIRST ARAB MAN with what looks like infinite regret. He puts his hand on FIRST ARAB MAN'S shoulder, a gesture of reassurance or even kindness. Then he takes a pistol from under his clothing and, without fuss or hesitation, shoots him in the head.

27 EXT. ROAD. TURN OFF TO VILLAGE. DAY. 27

ARMSTRONG passes the turning to the village. He has a thought. He brakes hard. He gets a map out. He looks at the map. His finger traces a short-cut across country - via the village he's just clocked - to the airfield. ARMSTRONG reverses back towards the turning. He swings the Land Rover down the track that leads to and through the village.

28 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY. 28

The INSURGENTS dragging the dead man off the road.

INSURGENTS can see the dust and then hear the Land Rover coming. They won't make it to the nearest dwelling to hide the body. They drag the body behind the truck instead.

29 OMITTED 29

30 OMITTED 30

31 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY. 31

As ARMSTRONG approaches the village, VILLAGERS re-emerging from their houses being told by INSURGENTS to go about their business as normal. Resume normal life please, nothing to see here. INSURGENTS retreat into the dwelling with the weapons cache inside. Will Armstrong spot the dead body?

32 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY. 32

ARMSTRONG slows as he drives through the village. Nobody looking at him, nobody interested in his presence. This is a bit odd, he feels.

33 INT. DWELLING. VILLAGE. DAY. 33

The INSURGENTS look on through slit windows as Armstrong stops the Land Rover almost right outside. An INSURGENT lifts a rifle. The weapons cache cannot be discovered. If Armstrong gets out of the Land Rover, he's dead. He might be dead anyway - an INSURGENT takes aim through slit window. A VILLAGER moves into the line of fire between Insurgent and Armstrong. ARMSTRONG looks at the VILLAGER. The VILLAGER looks away. ARMSTRONG doesn't like it. It's just a feeling, no more than that. ARMSTRONG should get out and check this out and he thinks about it but then looks at his watch and remembers how late he is and drives on. He puts his foot down a bit as he comes out the far side of the village.

34 EXT. MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY.

34

MARY Markham (on her way in) heavily pregnant and carrying a plastic Christmas tree, passes NICK (on his way out) at the entrance. GEORGE MARKHAM, age 6, insisting on dragging a second tree in all by himself. MARY looks at NICK.

NICK

I was just taking a last look at
the desert - from the roof.

She nods. MARY knows he's lying. He nods. He goes. She watches him go.

35 EXT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

35

ALISON, towel wrapped around her, opens the door to MARY.

ALISON

My fourth shower of the day.
Sometimes I think it's all I do.
Sweat and wash.

MARY clocks the gin bottle. Not all...

MARY

Perspire and ablute.

ALISON

Mmmm?

MARY

The men do the sweating and the
washing.

ALISON stares at the Christmas tree. A woman on the edge.

ALISON

What would any of us do without
you?

MARY

Are you all right, Alison?

ALISON

The walls used to sweat. Do you
remember? In Hong Kong. We'd sit
and watch the water running down
the walls.

So no then, she's not all right.

MARY

We all think he should have got it.

ALISON

Hmm?

MARY

Ed - promotion.

Alison laughs. That's not it. She thinks that's it..

MARY (CONT'D)

So it'll be hard for him with the
new man. He'll need your support.

ALISON nods (all right let her think that's the thing that's
breaking her heart in two) and then smiles and then nods
again. MARY holding the Christmas tree.

MARY (CONT'D)

This is for you and Ed.

MARY knows. She knows everything.

36

INT. MARKHAM'S OFFICE. BASE. DAY.

36

ED in with MARKHAM. MARKHAM moves the photograph of Kadir
Hakim around on his desk.

MARKHAM

What did your man say?

ED

He's the charismatic leader they've
all been waiting for. And to
announce himself to the world it's
us Redcaps he's after.

ED picks up the picture of Kadir.

*

MARKHAM

That's every day in Aden, Ed. What
would you have me do? Send the
whole unit out on night patrol and
not give Captain Page a send off
because your source has a feeling
in his waters?

ED

Give me permission to interview the
prisoner. My source says..

MARKHAM

My orders are to leave him to stew.
Talking to these people without
softening them up doesn't work.

ED

How would we know that? Has it ever
been tried?

MARKHAM looks at him.

ED (CONT'D)

You're obeying orders.

MARKHAM

That's what we do. Don't be bitter,
Ed. If you get angry because you
were passed over for promotion
you'll be passed over next time.

ED

There's not a mark on me.

37 OMITTED

37

38 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

38

GEORGE

Bang. BANG

MARY MARKHAM up a step ladder. She's very pregnant. GEORGE
playing with Matchbox motors every single one of which is a
military vehicle. Green Teddy looking on.

MARY

George, darling.

GEORGE is smashing cars into each other and making explosion
noises, like every small boy.

GEORGE

Crash! Big crash!

MARY

Get the angel for Mummy.

He hands her the angel for the top of the tree. She can't
reach the top. She might topple if she stretches too far..

GEORGE

It's a fairy.

MARY

I think it's an angel.

She reaches out as far as she can.. almost..

GEORGE

It's a fucking fairy.

MARY nearly falls off the ladder. She is still for a moment
recovering her balance, her equilibrium and her map of how
the world is supposed to be. GEORGE hasn't missed a beat (no
element of challenge in his use of the word)and he's back
playing with his cars. MARY comes down the ladder.

MARY

Where did you hear that word,
darling?

GEORGE

Mrs Laithwaite. What's the difference?

MARY

Hmm?

GEORGE

Between fairies and angels.

MARY

Angels are men.

GEORGE

No, they're not.

MARY

Ask daddy.

Daddy! MARKHAM at the door.

GEORGE

You do it, daddy. Mummy can't reach.

Daddy - the returning hero - will do it. Mummy can't reach. Mummy is good at hiding the small part of her that resents this. MARKHAM is distracted - not ready for this home stuff.

MARKHAM

You do it.

GEORGE

I can't.

MARKHAM

Yes, you can.

GEORGE

(Close to tears - not being able to do what his father says he can do is too tough) I can't.

MARY looking at MARKHAM, a look that says as gently and subtly as possible not to take out whatever it is that's troubling him on their son. MARKHAM softens.

MARKHAM

Yes you can.

He swings him up onto his shoulders. GEORGE delighted. MARY hands him the angel and with great solemnity he places it on top of the tree. MARY kisses her husband. He feels something tense in her. And vice versa.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Tidy up your cars.

GEORGE does as he's told. MARKHAM calls Mary out on why she's being/looking concerned for him.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

What is it?

MARY

Nothing.

MARKHAM

Not nothing, Mary. Tell me.

MARY

The number he wants on the back of his football shirt for Christmas..

MARKHAM

I don't understand.

MARY

Have you tried sewing a number eight?

MARKHAM

Is that it? Is that all?

She nods because she's a good wife and she's married to a man with a stressful job who needs all her support and this deeply domestic problem has eased the strain.

MARY

And you?

MARKHAM

I'm fine.

39

EXT. RAF BASE. DAY.

39

ARMSTRONG jumps out of the Land Rover, marches round in front of JOE and HONOR and salutes, stamping his foot.

ARMSTRONG

Corporal Armstrong. Sir.

HONOR smiling a bit - knowing she shouldn't, but unable to stop herself - at her husband being saluted.

JOE

You're late, Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG

Sir yes sir sorry sir.

HONOR

Hello, Armstrong.

She takes off her sunglasses. A bit of a move this - suddenly her eyes and then a smile too. A dazzle. She knows how to do this stuff. Not good for Joe - she's undermining him in his first contact with one of the men.

JOE

Why?

ARMSTRONG

Sir?

JOE

Why are you late?

ARMSTRONG

The war doesn't stop, sir, at anyone's convenience, sir.

JOE

Are you being facetious?

ARMSTRONG

I don't know sir.

JOE

It's a yes or no answer, Corporal.

ARMSTRONG

It is if you know what facetious means, sir.

HONOR bites her lip so as not to laugh. ARMSTRONG sees it. Pretends not to. He puts the cases into the Land Rover.

JOE

Don't do that, darling.

HONOR

What?

JOE

He needs to know that lateness won't be tolerated by me.

HONOR

What did I do?

JOE

You took your sunglasses off.

Here comes ARMSTRONG. HONOR puts her sunglasses back on.

GEORGE comes in and looks on at his father transforming himself from day time glamorous to evening glamorous. He eyes up his red cap. MARY comes in and smiles. GEORGE goes.

MARKHAM

What would you like for Christmas?

MARY

I'd give anything for a wet week-end in Haslemere.

Downstairs Alison is playing Love Letters again.

MARKHAM

That song again. You'd think she'd get tired of it.

MARY comes and rests her head against his shoulder. They shadow shuffle a few half dance steps inside a square foot of floor - memory, their history, like the echo of a dance they had a hundred years ago.

MARY

I'm so glad I'm married to you.

MARKHAM

Funny thing to say.

MARY

I think it every day.

MARKHAM

What if it were a different number?
What if it weren't a number eight?

MARY

Then my life would be without a single wrinkle.

MARKHAM

You go. The wives are waiting.

YUSRA comes in with a basket of clean laundry.

YUSRA

Sorry.

MARY smiles - reassuring her that it's all right to come in.
YUSRA puts the laundry on the bed and goes.

MARY

We should be asking her to baby-sit.

MARKHAM

I prefer Corporal Stoneham doing it.

MARY

Calamine lotion for his prickly heat;

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
fan speed high until he goes to bed
then turn it down to the second
slowest speed; bed time is straight
after Uncle Bill on BFBS. Two puffs
on his asthma inhaler. Don't forget
to tell Corporal Stoneham all of
this... It's important. And Green
Teddy needs his pyjamas on for bed.

They smile at this and her list. The warmth between them
enables MARKHAM finally to tell her a little of what he's
feeling - deep ambivalence about obeying orders and whether
there's a difference between rules and morality.

MARKHAM
Ed Laithwaite took the hood off a
prisoner today.

She wants to say the right thing but she won't risk it until
she knows what he thinks..

MARKHAM (CONT'D)
I had to put it back on.

41 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. HALL. DAY.

41

MARY kisses GEORGE (playing with his motors) good-night.
Green Teddy in his lap.

MARY
Good night, lovely boy. Good night
Green Teddy.

GEORGE
You smell nice, Mummy.

She smiles and goes. Softness and loveliness.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Fucking nice.

Back to his motors.

42 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY.

42

MARKHAM and STONEHAM (just arrived) by the door.

MARKHAM
Two targets for tonight, Corporal.

STONEHAM
Sir.

MARKHAM
Number one - a haircut. Short and
sensible.
(MORE)

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Number two - a new favourite
footballer. It has to be a winger
so there's a number eleven or a
number seven on his back.
Achieve these and I'll get you
mentioned in dispatches. Good lad.

MARKHAM goes. STONEHAM takes a deep breath and turns to the
tasks ahead.

43

INT. GUARD ROOM. DAY.

43

ED comes in quietly - he's not supposed to be doing this -
and switches the generator and tape off. He approaches the *
hooded PRISONER. He takes him by the hand and leads him to a *
table. He helps him sit. He puts the photograph of Kadir on *
the table. He reaches forward and takes the hood off. The *
picture of Kadir is not referred to directly during the *
scene. But ED is watching for the PRISONER's reaction to it. *
PRISONER blinking. He looks wrecked but more than anything
he's hot and he's thirsty. ED reaches down for his water
bottle. The PRISONER flinches. ED opens his water and pushes
it across the table. The PRISONER stares at it and then grabs
it and drinks greedily. ED gets up. PRISONER watches him very
carefully and then glances at the picture of Kadir. ED *
catches this. ED moves his own chair to the centre of the *
room directly under the fan. The PRISONER worried. What is
this? Why is the chair there? ED points at the chair and
nods. PRISONER - with trepidation - goes to it. ED nods.
PRISONER (frightened) sits. ED moves behind the PRISONER -
now he's really frightened. ED turns on the fan. The blessed
relief of cool air. The PRISONER incredibly grateful. We see
a tiny (guarded) relaxation in the PRISONER. ED speaks very
quietly and up very close.

ED

You don't have a criminal record.
You haven't committed a crime that
we know about. I could let you go.
If you tell me what you know about
the NLF; if you tell me what
they're planning. A doctor knows
when a patient is dying; a lawyer
knows when his client is guilty; I
know you know. (A beat) Cigarette?

A long beat. PRISONER takes a cigarette. This is working.
He's in here. Then MARKHAM at the door.

MARKHAM

I gave you an order. I said to
leave him alone.

ED hasn't turned or moved. He can't believe it. He had him..

ED

I had him. He was about to talk.

He stands and heads out, stopping before leaving.

(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)
If something happens.. Your
conscience, sir..

MARKHAM looking long and hard at the hood. A beat. Slowly,
the PRISONER turns his head to look at Markham. MARKHAM
hasn't moved. Will he replace the hood?

*
*
*

44 EXT/INT. SERGEANTS MESS. DAY.

44

Crates of beer being delivered for the Nick Page farewell. ED
smoking and pacing.

ORCHOVER
On duty tonight, sir?

ED smiles enigmatically.

45 EXT. ROAD. SEA. DAY.

45

HONOR wearing a head-scarf - a bit of Audrey Hepburn in with
the Jackie K - holding it on as they drive.

HONOR
She sells sea shells on the sea
shore. The sea shells that she
sells are sea shells she's sure.
Joe..?

JOE shakes his head. He doesn't want to play.

HONOR (CONT'D)
We were playing it on the plane.

Honor's not getting this right, how to be with other ranks.

HONOR (CONT'D)
You couldn't get it, could you,
darling? Not at all. Not even
slowly..

JOE doesn't like this.

HONOR (CONT'D)
(Arabic) **Intabeh.**
[Be careful.]

ARMSTRONG looks at her in the mirror, struck.

ARMSTRONG
You speak Arabic?

HONOR
No. The man at the airport kept
telling us the same thing. (Arabic)
Intabeh, arguuk intabeh.
(English)Such a beautiful language.

ARMSTRONG glances at her in the mirror.

HONOR (CONT'D)

We got married a week ago and we haven't had time for a honeymoon so this drive is it - this is our week in Capri, Armstrong.

She laughs and snuggles in closer to JOE. ARMSTRONG looks in his rearview mirror at the honeymoon couple.

JOE

What did he mean? The man at the airport?

ARMSTRONG

(A white lie) Welcome to Aden.

46 EXT. BASE. DAY.

46

ED walking around the perimeter, smoking and thinking.

47 EXT. ROAD. DAY.

47

HONOR asleep, head on JOE's shoulder.

JOE

(He shouldn't ask but he can't help it) What was he like? Captain Page?

ARMSTRONG

You'll be taking over Captain Page's quarters, sir. Technically he hasn't moved out yet. But he won't be doing much sleeping tonight..

JOE

You haven't answered my question.

ARMSTRONG

We trusted him with our lives, sir.

HONOR not asleep after all..

HONOR

What about me? Who are my new friends going to be?

48 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

48

ALISON standing on a stool with glass in hand - a little precarious this, even without half a bottle of gin inside you - to put Ed's hat on the top of the tree. ED comes in. She salutes the tree.

ALISON
Brigadier Christmas.

ED sees the sprig of heather on the side. She sees that he's seen this.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Captain Page came to say goodbye.
Which says a lot about him, don't
you think?

No response from ED.

ALISON (CONT'D)
He told me something he shouldn't
have. He said everyone thinks it
should have been you. Drink?

ED
Why would he say that?

ALISON
Why wouldn't he?

ED
Because it's not true. I'm just not
one of the chaps, Al.

ALISON
Do you mind if I do? [drink]

She doesn't wait for an answer before pouring a top up. MARY comes in - the door is open.

MARY
Knock knock.

ED
Come in Mary. Good of Nick Page.

MARY
What's that?

ED
To do the farewell rounds.

MARY
Hmmm?

ED
This afternoon.

MARY latches on super fast - the cross examining tone, Alison's glance at the heather - and saves Alison by responding in the way she does.

MARY

He brought me a sprig of heather.
Such a charmer. Did he come and see
you too?

ALISON smiles and nods and looks at the heather.

MARY (CONT'D)

And there was me thinking I was the
special one.

49 INT. SERGEANTS MESS. DAY.

49

BAXTER finishes a beer. ED walks in.

ED

(To Baxter) I don't want you
drinking tonight.

BAXTER

Too late.

ED hasn't seen MARKHAM.

*

MARKHAM

The whole unit is on the base; the
base is secure..

ED thinking, not really listening.

ED

Yes, sir.

MARKHAM

The best officers know when to
switch off, Ed.

ED

Yes, sir.

Damn. He shouldn't have said that.. An implied suggestion
that Ed is not the best.. ED goes.

50 INT. LANDING OUTSIDE LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

50

ALISON slips out. She's had a lot to drink.

51 INT. NICK'S (MARTIN) FLAT. DAY.

51

ALISON lets herself in.

52 INT. NICK'S (MARTIN) FLAT. BEDROOM. DAY. 52

ALISON gets into Nick's bed. As close as she can get to the loved one. She can hear singing from the Sergeant's mess - For He's a Jolly Good Fellow. She puts her face into the pillow, smelling him on it.

53 EXT. BASE / ENTRANCE CHECKPOINT. DAY. 53 *

The Land Rover driving into the base. The excitement of arrival. HONOR sitting up very straight.

HONOR
Say it for me, Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG
Ma'm.

HONOR
The Arabic. Say "Welcome to Aden" again.

ARMSTRONG
(Arabic) **Intabeh.**
[Be careful.]

54 OMITTED 54

55 INT. GUARD ROOM. DAY. 55

ED comes in. The PRISONER is not wearing the hood. *

ED
So..

The PRISONER looking at Ed's watch. ED sees this and tries to read what it might mean. The PRISONER seems jumpy.

56 INT/EXT. DWELLING/VILLAGE. DAY. 56

INSURGENTS and KADIR HAKIM (all armed) leaving on a mission.

57 INT. JOE AND HONOR'S MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY. 57

JOE shown in by ARMSTRONG who stands there awkwardly, waiting to be dismissed. JOE remembers about dismissing him.

JOE
Thank you, Corporal.

HONOR waits. She folds her arms. She's waiting for something. JOE grasps what it is. He picks her up and carries her across the thresh-hold. He puts her down.

She kisses him and stretches her arms out - embracing their first very own home. She heads for the bedroom.

58 INT. MARTIN FLAT. BEDROOM. DAY.

58

JOE comes in. HONOR standing staring at:

HONOR
Mrs Page..

Mrs Page? ALISON (in the bed, half awake) laughs.

ALISON
There's no Mrs Page. He's married
to the army. They all are.

She tries to get out of bed the effort for which reminds her just how drunk she is.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Drunk. Sorry. Don't tell anyone.

She sits with her head between her legs, a very unfeminine posture for 1965. JOE at the door behind HONOR.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Ah. The new man.

She looks at him steadily and right in the eye.

59 INT. MARTIN FLAT. FRONT ROOM. DUSK.

59

JOE and HONOR in the front room re-grouping.

HONOR
Maybe we should just let her sleep?

But here she comes.

ALISON
So drunk. Wrong house. The right
house in a way..actually.. but..
wrong. We're in and out of each
others quarters all the time.
You'll see.

She looks straight at HONOR and JOE.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Everyone is so looking forward to
you both. Oh. (To Joe) The
Sergeants Mess right now - they're
singing him out. Why don't you pop
along and they can sing you in? In
with the new out with the old. In
out in out shake it all about.

JOE

Will you be all right, darling?

ALISON looks deep into HONOR's eyes.

ALISON

Of course she will. We're going to
be the best of friends.

JOE goes. ALISON leans back against the wall and holds her
hand out in the direction of HONOR. HONOR approaches her.
ALISON takes her hands and looks into her face.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Incorruptible.

60 EXT. COUNTRY. NEAR RMP BASE. DUSK.

60

KADIR HAKIM and INSURGENTS single file march. They halt and
look across at the base from a hidden vantage point.

61 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DUSK.

61

STONEHAM brings in a pair of scissors from the kitchen.
GEORGE putting pyjamas on Green Teddy, doesn't look up.

GEORGE

I don't want a haircut.

He puts on his father's red cap.

STONEHAM

You'll be a soldier one day.

GEORGE

I want to be a footballer.

STONEHAM takes a series of cigarette cards out of his pocket
and shows GEORGE one of them - George Best.

STONEHAM

He'll be the best footballer the
world has seen. You watch.

GEORGE

What's his name?

STONEHAM

George.

GEORGE

Like me!

STONEHAM

(Like he hasn't thought of this) Oh
yes.

GEORGE
He's got long hair.

STONEHAM
Yes....

One step forward two steps back.

GEORGE
What number is he?

STONEHAM
Seven. Sometimes eleven.

Stoneham under pressure. He needs this haircut to happen.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)
Have you ever been up on the roof
at night?

GEORGE
No.

STONEHAM
What do you think you might see?

George connects the roof with:

GEORGE
The stars!

Bingo. Exactly what Stoneham has been seeking to elicit.

STONEHAM
How about I cut your hair while you
look at the stars?

The haircut is on. They'll do it on the roof.

62 EXT. SCRUB JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER. DUSK. 62

KADIR HAKIM moving to a more advanced position closer to the base. He finds the perfect cover he knows is there and settles himself. Laying low as dusk starts to fall. Other INSURGENTS make their moves to more forward positions.

63 EXT. GUARD ROOM/SCRUB JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER. DUSK. 63

ED outside smoking intensely. KADIR HAKIM takes a look through his rifle sight. The shot could be on. He settles himself. ED stubs out his cigarette and goes back inside.

64 INT. GUARD ROOM. NIGHT.

64

ED takes his watch off and places it on the table. PRISONER making a big effort not to look at it. Then he just has to glance at it. ED's thought. Might it be that this man doesn't want to be here because he knows the base is going to be attacked? ED stands up quickly and ushers the PRISONER by the arm outside.

65 INT/EXT. MARKHAM FLAT. ROOF. NIGHT.

65

GEORGE and STONEHAM about to go out onto the flat roof.

STONEHAM

Promise me you won't tell your Dad.

GEORGE smiles, from somewhere beneath a huge, red cap. Out they go - the roof, the night sky, the stars. There's a chest high wall around the roof.

66 EXT. BASE. NIGHT.

66

JOE heading for the mess. A big moment ahead. KADIR HAKIM's POV through his rifle sight. JOE's route takes him behind a building and out of the shot.

67 EXT. BASE. NIGHT.

67

PRISONER'S high anxiety as ED takes him round the back of the guardroom. He REALLY wants to get back inside. ED looks out at the desert. Sounds of raucousness from the mess. ED worried and alone.

ED

What's happening?

He's super intense and focused here. Both men are breathing fast.

ED (CONT'D)

What's happening?

MARKHAM on his way to the mess, sees this.

MARKHAM

What are you doing? Lieutenant Laithwaite.. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING? Why is he out here?

PRISONER has wet himself.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Return this prisoner now to the guardroom.

(MORE)

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Then get yourself to the Sergeant's
Mess and start behaving like a
proper officer.

ED

Sir..

MARKHAM

Do it. Now.

JOE approaches, sees, steps back, keeps out of sight.

68 EXT. ROOF. NIGHT.

68

GEORGE and STONEHAM up on the flat roof. The haircut. The
stars.

69 EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. NIGHT.

69

Laughter within. JOE approaching. He stops, screws up his
courage.

70 EXT. SCRUB JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER. NIGHT.

70

KADIR HAKIM's POV of Sergeants mess. This will be the target.
He gestures for an INSURGENT to join him. He whispers a
command. INSURGENT goes back to pass on the order.

71 INT/EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. NIGHT.

71

Big booze up. ED the only one not drinking. He's very tense.
NICK joins him by the door.

NICK

I'm sorry. It should have been you.

JOE comes in. ED clocks him coming in.

ED

Thanks Nick.

*

MARKHAM taps his glass and stands on a chair.

MARKHAM

Gentlemen, remember this. We are
the British Army and we represent
Her Majesty the Queen.

A murmuring of approval.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

So I don't wish to see any
drunkenness or foolishness tonight.

MARKHAM is going to bugger the party right up.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

At twenty two hundred hours I'm retiring to my married quarters - from where I have to report I will be unable to see or hear anything.

Smiles all round.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

Captain Page..

NICK

Sir?

MARKHAM

I'm giving you the choice. Late night cribbage and cocoa with me or an evening not playing cribbage and not drinking cocoa..

Laughter.. Then an effortless change of gear into what is his heartfelt farewell to Nick.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

.. in the company of the men with whom you have shared sixteen months of danger, fear, sweat, bad jokes, mutual respect, collective courage and an experience neither you nor they will ever forget.

Everyone moved. NICK really is loved. JOE looks on. ED looks on at JOE looking on.

72

INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. NIGHT.

72

All the WIVES together. HONOR brought in by ALISON. All the WOMEN turn to look at her. She straightens her skirt. Self conscious Jackie K.

HONOR

Wool in Aden...

MARY looks at her.

MARY

Your MFO boxes haven't arrived..

HONOR smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

None of my dresses fit. You can have them all while I'm so enormous.

HONOR looks at the profoundly 1950's maternity dress MARY is wearing. ALISON catches her eye; their amusement is shared. They're going to be friends these two.

73 INT/EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. NIGHT. 73

NICK is presented with the drum. He feigns surprise.

74 EXT. SCRUB JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER. NIGHT. 74

KADIR HAKIM looking at the base. Two INSURGENTS bring up the bazouka. They start positioning it for a shot at the mess.

75 INT/EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. BASE - CONTINUOUS 75

A cheer. NICK stands on a chair. He's holding the drum under one arm and a plaque in the other hand. JOE listening and looking round at the rapt men in the room.

NICK

I can't begin to put into words
what it has meant to me to serve
with all of you. So I won't. Except
to say that I have been guided in
everything I've done by what some
army officers call respect for
their men, others call comradeship
but which I have no hesitation in
describing as love.

That's a big word and this is 1965 but it's the only word
that will do and the men listening to Nick know it and how
moved they are is reflected in the steadiness of the silence.

76 EXT. ROOF. NIGHT. 76

STONEHAM cutting GEORGE's hair.

STONEHAM

Done.

Haircut done. GEORGE doesn't like it. He puts the red cap on.
STONEHAM reaches for the stars as a distraction technique:

STONEHAM (CONT'D)

Even the nearest star is billions
of miles away but it feels like you
can reach up and touch it..

Big mistake.

GEORGE

Up on the wall and I could touch
it.

77 INT/EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. BASE. NIGHT. 77

ED by the door. JOE tries to make friends.

JOE
Laithwaite? Captain Martin.

ED
Call me Ed. Captain.

JOE
Not a drinking man?

ED
Not tonight.

MARKHAM looks at his watch. 2200. Time to go. He slips out.

78 EXT. ROOF. NIGHT. 78

GEORGE trying to jump up onto the wall. He can't do it.

GEORGE
Lift me up like Daddy does.

79 EXT. SCRUB JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER - CONTINUOUS 79

The drum beating. Faster and faster. The bazooka is ready. The INSURGENTS look to KADIR HAKIM for the nod to fire. KADIR HAKIM looks up at the roof as a red cap appears. Slowly, he pulls his rifle round. He wants this shot. He gestures for the two INSURGENTS with the bazooka to wait. This is the one.. This is his red cap..

80 INT/EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. NIGHT. 80

ORCHOVER and NICK on a table each in a kind of Cossack dance off. Drum banging, boots on the ground stamping out the rhythm, tables slapped. Faster, faster, faster.

81 EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. NIGHT. 81

MARKHAM comes out, checks his watch and smiles.

82 EXT. SCRUB JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER - CONTINUOUS 82

KADIR HAKIM looks through the rifle sight. We see GEORGE's head (red cap on) in the cross-hairs. The noise from the mess. KADIR HAKIM holds his concentration. Settled for the shot..

83 EXT. ROOF. NIGHT. 83

Bang. A shot. GEORGE falls backwards off the wall on top of STONEHAM breaking his fall. The red cap on the ground.

84 EXT. SERGEANTS MESS. NIGHT. 84

NICK carried out high on shoulders. BANG. BANG. BANG. Fireworks light up the night sky. Three Land Rover headlights come on at once. And searchlights - playing across the night sky. A hell of a show. MARKHAM orchestrating this light and sound show with eight MP's. NICK holds his arms out to acknowledge what his CO is doing for him.

85 EXT. SCRUB JUST OUTSIDE THE PERIMETER. NIGHT. 85

KADIR HAKIM and the INSURGENTS - WHAT THE FUCK? - in hurried retreat. They're taking the cracks, bangs and lights as a massive response to their presence.

86 EXT. ROOF. NIGHT. 86

GEORGE on the ground. STONEHAM over him.

STONEHAM
Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ.

STONEHAM looking at GEORGE - where's the wound? Where's the blood? There isn't any. He looks at the red cap. A hole in it. A bullet has gone through the cap missing the top of George's head by half a centimeter. STONEHAM desperately looking at the child. He's untouched. Jesus Christ. JESUS FUCKING CHRIST.

GEORGE
What happened?

STONEHAM
Don't move.

STONEHAM looks across the roof to the door.

STONEHAM (CONT'D)
Stay underneath me. Crawl when I
crawl.

Like a baby elephant underneath its mother, GEORGE crawls to the door under STONEHAM. STONEHAM grabs the red cap on the way. They reach the door. He reaches up for the handle. And pulls the door open. He ushers GEORGE in ahead of him.

87 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. NIGHT. 87

STONEHAM getting himself together. The red cap.

STONEHAM

Don't tell your Dad we borrowed it.

88 INT. BEDROOM. MARKHAM FLAT. NIGHT. 88

STONEHAM puts his own red cap on the peg in the wardrobe where Markham's belongs.

89 INT. BATHROOM. LAITHWAITE FLAT. NIGHT. 89

ALISON staring at the mirror. MARY comes in.

MARY

The door was open.

ALISON

I'm pregnant. It's not Ed's.

MARY

Alison..

ALISON

I'm going to tell him.

MARY

Such close relationships we make in Army life. And they matter so much, don't they? At the time. But we pack up and we move on. And we forget. Because we have to.

ALISON turns and looks at MARY.

MARY (CONT'D)

In the morning he'll be gone. And your baby belongs to Ed.

89A EXT. MARRIED QUARTERS. NIGHT. 89A

Fireworks over the married quarters.

89B EXT. BASE. MORNING. DAY TWO. 89B

Sunrise over the base.

90 INT. BARRACKS. BASE. MORNING. 90

Dormitory. Spartan. ARMSTRONG in his bunk practising an Arabic phrase. Repeated. The call to prayer outside. Repeated.

91 EXT. MARRIED QUARTERS. MORNING.

91

YUSRA walking to work. ARMSTRONG loitering with intent. He falls in with YUSRA as she walks.

ARMSTRONG

(Arabic) **Lamma ashooofak afrah.**

[Seeing you makes me happy.]

He gives her an envelope (it contains a love letter). She hides it in her clothing and moves on. Then she stops.

YUSRA

(English) Seeing you makes me happy much.

ARMSTRONG

That's..

YUSRA

Is this wrong?

She means her English.

ARMSTRONG

No. It's.. much right.

92 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. MORNING.

92

MARKHAM preparing to leave. His red cap feels a bit tight. He doesn't know it but this is Stoneham's cap, of course.

MARKHAM

I hope you were good for Corporal Stoneham last night?

GEORGE subdued and deep in thought. Green teddy in the crook of his arm. MARKHAM and MARY exchange a glance. MARY gives GEORGE his asthma inhaler. He takes his two puffs.

GEORGE

(With great seriousness)
I like George Best.

MARKHAM

Good. That's very good. What number is on his shirt?

GEORGE doesn't answer the question because he's deeply occupied now with the thing he needs to tell his father..

GEORGE

Daddy?

MARY looking on.

MARKHAM

Yes?

GEORGE

Daddy?

MARKHAM

Yes?

GEORGE

I got shot in the head.

MARKHAM tousles his son's hair.

MARKHAM

Sounds like you had a good time.

93

INT. MARTIN FLAT. MORNING.

93

HONOR in the door to the bathroom watching JOE shave. The newness of their relationship is such that him shaving (so everyday, so normal) is exciting to her and seeing him do something personal and knowing that she's allowed in on it is a thrilling, romantic privilege.

HONOR

When I asked you if you had any secrets..

JOE stops shaving for a moment..

HONOR (CONT'D)

I wouldn't mind.

.. and then carries on shaving.

94

INT. BASE. MORNING.

94

ED and MARKHAM walking and talking.

MARKHAM

Quiet night after all.

They walk past the Union Jack on the flagpole. ED won't look at him. MARKHAM knows ED is a problem and he has a go at talking to him. *

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

None of us should apologize for what we've given to parts of the world lucky enough to have us. And once the roads and the schools and the hospitals are built, we leave. The British Empire is benevolent.

ED

What's the longest conversation you've had with anyone in Aden who was born here? Have you had the courtesy or the curiosity or the imagination to ask anyone if they agree with you?

This is borderline insubordination. MARKHAM hesitates.

ED (CONT'D)

(Quietly, sorry) They hate you and everything you stand for.

MARKHAM

"You"? It's "us", Ed. We wear the same uniform.

Here comes NICK. He spent the night in the mess and it shows.

MARKHAM (CONT'D)

We all trust each other because we live by the same rules.

*

95

INT. MARTIN FLAT. MORNING

95

JOE looks at HONOR in her woolen suit.

JOE

You should wear what Mrs Markham has lent you.

HONOR

Darling, they're..

JOE

She'll be offended if you don't. And you're beautiful whatever you wear.

HONOR

Alison said she'd help me out with..

She waves her arm at the empty flat.

HONOR (CONT'D)

.. everything.

JOE

Lieutenant Laithwaite is.. a Lieutenant. Below me in rank.

HONOR

So..

JOE

What if I have to order him to do something he doesn't want to do? It won't help either of us if my wife and his wife are friends.

She's hurt by his sharpness. She smiles bravely.

HONOR

Where will you be today?

JOE

Out on patrol.

HONOR

I won't make you lunch, then?

JOE kisses her on the cheek on his way out. HONOR looks around her. She digs around in her suitcase and pulls out a pair of marigold rubber gloves. JOE hasn't gone. He stands at the door and looks at her, arguing with himself as to whether he's done the right thing marrying this woman.

96 INT. MARTIN FLAT. MORNING.

96

HONOR in rubber gloves cleaning in her Jackie K suit. The music from the Laithwaite flat. That song again. She listens. She takes the gloves off.

97 EXT. BASE. MORNING.

97

JOE, a private moment - getting himself together before meeting the men - outside the briefing tent. He hasn't seen ORCHOVER approaching.

ORCHOVER

The one you need to win over is Orchover.

JOE

Thank you. Corporal..

ORCHOVER

(Straight-faced) Orchover, sir.

NICK joins them. ORCHOVER moves off.

NICK

Twenty two years a Corporal. Never wanted to take his Sergeants exams. Normandy, The Rhine, Suez, Malaya.. He's seen it all. Him and Baxter - they're the backbone.

JOE

And the wives?

A beat. NICK slightly wrong-footed.

JOE (CONT'D)
(Sotto) Has Laithwaite got his wife
under control?

BAXTER joins them.

BAXTER
(To NICK) It's time, sir.

98 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. MORNING.

98

ALISON standing in the middle of the room, very still, doing nothing, living the departure of Nick as she knows it will be happening. She's not looking out of the window. A knock at the door. She goes quickly to the door. She's hoping for a last farewell. It's HONOR.

99 EXT. BASE. MORNING.

99

NICK being driven off the base sitting on the bonnet of Land Rover and banging on his drum as the men cheer and wave him out. STONEHAM on the verge of tears. ORCHOVER comes and stands beside him. ED isn't there.

100 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. MORNING.

100

ALISON listening to the banging of the drum - it goes right to her core. HONOR standing at her shoulder. HONOR goes to say something. ALISON puts her hand on her arm to stop her speaking and breaking the moment. ALISON listening intently to the sound of the drum receding. She can't stand it. ALISON runs out of the room, up the stairs and out onto the roof.

101 EXT. ROAD. LAND ROVER. MORNING.

101

ARMSTRONG and NICK singing as they drive into the desert. A soldier's lament.

102 EXT. FLAT ROOF. MORNING.

102

ALISON's pain. HONOR comes out onto the roof. ALISON can't look at her because of the tears streaming down her face.

103 EXT. ROAD. NEAR TURN OFF TO VILLAGE. MORNING.

103

ARMSTRONG driving. NICK next to him. ARMSTRONG thirsty. NICK hands him his water bottle. ARMSTRONG takes a deep swig. It's scotch. ARMSTRONG coughs and splutters and scotch goes all over his trousers.

ARMSTRONG

Scotch.

NICK affects his innocence.

NICK

Blimey.

ARMSTRONG stops. They're a few yards from the turn off down through the village. ARMSTRONG's shorts are wet with whisky.

NICK (CONT'D)

Stick them on the bonnet. They'll
be dry in two minutes.

ARMSTRONG gets out of the LANDROVER, looks about him - nobody around - and takes his gun belt off and then his shorts off. He lays his shorts flat on the bonnet, then steps away from the Land Rover to look at the landscape.

ARMSTRONG

It is beautiful, sir. This place.

He turns back just as NICK slides across into the driver seat and roars off down the road towards the village leaving ARMSTRONG alone and shortless. His POV of a waving and laughing NICK in the Land Rover. NICK stops. ARMSTRONG walks towards him. When he gets within a few yards, NICK accelerates away, hooting with laughter.

103A EXT. VILLAGE. DAY. CONTINUOUS.

103A

As NICK drives into the village ARMSTRONG sees a flash of metal in the sunlight and in that moment the fear that was in his gut earlier, the half felt sense of danger is fully felt and he tries to call out but his shout is too late and strangled for NICK to hear.

ARMSTRONG

COME BACK, SIR.

Two beats. ARMSTRONG's POV of the LAND ROVER on the far side of the village. Bang. An explosion. ARMSTRONG grabs his pistol from the gun belt on the ground (a panicked fiddle this) and starts running towards the explosion.

104 EXT. BASE. MORNING.

104

ED alone by the perimeter fence - looking out, listening intently. Is that gunfire? Was that an explosion?

105 EXT. VILLAGE. MORNING.

105

ARMSTRONG sprinting into the village with his pistol drawn. He comes round a corner and stops.

INSURGENTS firing (pointlessly, gleefully) into the blown up Land Rover wreckage. ARMSTRONG's been seen. He turns and runs for his life.

106 OMITTED 106

107 EXT. OUTSIDE VILLAGE. MORNING. 107

ARMSTRONG dives behind a rock. He peeks out. INSURGENTS coming his way. ARMSTRONG runs. An INSURGENT moves twenty yards to the side, changing his line/angle of sight. ARMSTRONG running. INSURGENT shouts. ARMSTRONG hears it. Flat out. He comes to an incredibly steep slope of scree - almost sheer. He looks back. The INSURGENTS coming. He has no choice. Like a fell runner down the steepest fell he goes for it down the slope. Half running, half bouncing. INSURGENTS running towards the top of the slope. ARMSTRONG almost at the bottom, loses control of his descent and he's falling fast the last fifty yards. He hits the bottom. His ankle very badly injured. He crawls fast along the narrow valley at the bottom and behind a rock. INSURGENTS arrive at the top. Their POV. Nothing. ARMSTRONG in serious pain. Breathing very fast and trying not to shout out with the agony he's in. He gets control of his breathing.

108 EXT. DESERT. DAY. 108

ARMSTRONG crawling. He's close to exhaustion. The heat. He looks back at his ankle. It's hugely swollen and the pain is profound. He puts his face in the dirt. Is he giving up? He lifts his face and there a hundred yards ahead up the valley side is what looks like a small shelter in the rock. He forces himself to get going again.

109 EXT. SHELTER. DESERT. DAY. 109

ARMSTRONG dragging himself up to the shelter. He crawls inside. He pulls himself round onto his back and props his back against the wall so that he's facing the door. He looks down at his pistol held in his lap. He passes out. A chopper passes over head.

110 EXT. BASE. DAY. 110

JOE waiting to address the men. MARKHAM looks over as BAXTER approaches JOE and says something quietly to him. More information on what has happened as it comes in. The look on Joe's face.

111 EXT. BASE. DAY.

111

JOE halfway through addressing his new men in what has become the hardest speech he will ever have to make.

JOE

RAF recon are saying it's a single Land Rover. It's burnt out. It's our job to find the people who did this. These are the moments our training is designed to deal with.

The camera goes round the faces. STONEHAM struggling. ORCHOVER seeing this.

STONEHAM

Sir? Is it them?

JOE

Captain Page and Corporal Armstrong should have been at the airfield two hours ago.

That's it, then. It has to be them.

JOE (CONT'D)

We go to the crime scene, we secure it, we collect evidence. The more professionalism we show now the better the chance of us finding whoever is responsible for this. Remember who we are and what Captain Page and Corporal Armstrong would expect from you.

112 INT/EXT. SHELTER. DAY.

112

ARMSTRONG opens his eyes. A YOUNG MAN standing at entrance to the shelter looking at him. ARMSTRONG feels for his pistol. Goats bleat. This is a goatherd. He looks at ARMSTRONG's swollen ankle. He goes. ARMSTRONG drags himself to the entrance. He's been found. Who will the goatherd tell about his presence? He has his pistol. He should shoot him. That's what his training tells him he must do. He lifts the pistol. He's got a shot - five seconds before the goatherd and his goats disappear from view. He can't do it.

113 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

113

ALISON in the middle of the room. MARY has just told her. A really long silence. No words. There are no words.

114 INT/EXT. SHELTER. DAY.

114

ARMSTRONG wakes up. Voices outside. He grabs his pistol. A woman comes in and gives him some water. It's YUSRA. Her face is mostly covered but there's no mistaking who it is. She clocks that he's recognized her. She shakes her head - telling him that he's not supposed to have recognized her. He's about to speak when an OLDER MAN appears at the entrance. Behind him the goatherd and his mother. They have brought food and water. And a stick to help him walk.

YUSRA

Come.

115 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY.

115

JOE hiding his anxiety as the unit arrives at the scene. BAXTER glances at him. JOE knows he's on trial here. And what could be harder than this? Everyone watching to see how he'll be. ED opening and closing his fist. DIMARCO muttering. Pumped up. BAXTER has some words of advice:

BAXTER

A little leeway, sir..

JOE

What do you mean?

BAXTER

You know what I'm saying.

JOE

No, Sergeant. I don't.

*

116 EXT. BLOWN UP LAND ROVER. VILLAGE. DAY.

116

The UNIT arrive at the crime scene. Several military vehicles already present - Royal Marine Commanders and Aden Armed Police. Sentries posted. SOLDIER secure the scene. The crime scene being combed for evidence. ORCHOVER talking to SOLDIER. A jumpy atmosphere. Lots of looks at the surrounding buildings. This could be a trap. They might still be here. ORCHOVER rejoins the unit.

ORCHOVER

Blindicide bazouka. Up close. They didn't stand a chance.

On ED. This is part of the weapons shipment he let through. In a way, he did this; he's responsible for the death of Nick Page. ED turns away. He's struggling to cope with his emotions. JOE at his shoulder.

JOE

The men are all finding this hard.
It's pretty vital that we officers
keep our emotions under control.

ED stares at JOE. Where to begin.. DIMARCO picks up half of Nick's drum and stares at it, uncomprehendingly and then bereft. ORCHOVER finds Nick's blackened corpse under the far side of the overturned vehicle. STONEHAM upset. ORCHOVER takes him away. BAXTER angry. JOE's POV of BAXTER leading a group of adrenaline driven MP's - they question (we don't hear what is said but it's very animated) a local MAN. BAXTER moves on and bangs on a door. No response. He bangs again. He's pumped up. A frightened looking WOMAN at the door.

JOE (CONT'D)

Baxter!

BAXTER turns to look at JOE. A bit of a challenge in the way he looks at him. JOE reads this.

JOE (CONT'D)

I need you here.

BAXTER joins JOE.

JOE (CONT'D)

They'll be long gone.

BAXTER

With respect sir, no sir. They
blend in sir. My guess is they'll
be here, hidden in with the locals.

JOE

No Armstrong..

BAXTER

Sir?

JOE

No remains. Nothing. Why not?

JOE walks back up the road. BAXTER and the other men watch him go. JOE finds Armstrong's gun belt where he took it off on the way into the village. The others join him.

JOE (CONT'D)

Did he wear dog tags?

ORCHOVER

Yes, sir.

JOE

So where are they? No dog tags at
the scene. And his gun belt up
here..

STONEHAM

He's not dead.

ED

They've taken him..?

ORCHOVER increasingly nervous.

JOE

Radio back to base. I want a search party out now.

ORCHOVER

Sir, I think we should move out.
We're sitting ducks..

JOE

We're not finished here.

117 EXT. VILLAGE. DAY.

117

The corpse wrapped in a ground sheet being loaded onto a Land Rover. ORCHOVER looking about him, nervous. JOE watching, overseeing the removal of Page's body. The lifting of the body into the Land Rover.

JOE

Steady.

Done. They're ready to go. JOE takes his time. He gets into the lead Land Rover. A pause. He straightens his headgear. Finally, he nods for the cortege to move off.

JOE (CONT'D)

Slower.

Really? Bloody hell. STONEHAM slows down.

JOE (CONT'D)

Slower.

STONEHAM slows to a crawl.

JOE (CONT'D)

We take our dead with us and we do it with dignity. I want them all to know what the British Army is made of.

The convoy crawls out of the village at 4 mph. Not one of the soldiers looking anywhere other than straight ahead. The sound of a Singer sewing machine.

118 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 118

MARY sewing a number seven on the back of a Manchester United shirt. A twinge. Not now, please. She hasn't finished sewing.

119 EXT. GUARD ROOM. DAY. 119

The Land Rover arriving back on base. ED jumps out and goes straight into the guardroom. JOE gets out.

120 INT. GUARD ROOM. DAY. 120

ED has the PRISONER rammed up against the wall shouting at him in Arabic. JOE piles in and pulls ED off. The PRISONER slides down to the floor. Joe's anger as strong as Ed's.

JOE
We're not like that.

ED stares at him.

ED
Yes we are. We pretend we're not.
But we are.

JOE
Help him up, Lieutenant.

ED
These are real people. Some of them are wonderful, some of them are bastards - most of them are in between... JUST LIKE US. You can't treat people the same because the rules say..

JOE
Then why the hell were you doing that to him?

ED
BECAUSE HE KNEW. Because he's one of the bastards.

Then the real gut truth, the thing that's killing him:

ED (CONT'D)
Because I knew. I'm sorry.

JOE
Go home. Have a drink and be with your wife.

ED doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

121 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY. 121

Ketty Lester. ED comes in. ALISON sitting very still. VERY still. ED goes over to her. His hand comes up a quarter of the way towards her shoulder. A tiny but discernible flinch. He withdraws his hand. He stands beside his wife with both hands down by his sides.

122 INT. MARKHAM FLAT. DAY. 122

MARKHAM trying to write a letter of condolence to Nick's family. That song again.

MARKHAM

Can you get her to stop playing
that bloody song. Sorry. Sorry. I
can't write this..

MARY

Where do they live?

MARKHAM

Sancreed. The toe end of Cornwall.

MARY

We've been there. The sheep in the
churchyard. Do you remember?

MARKHAM

He was their only son. It will kill
them, Mary. Help me.

MARY feels a twinge. She ignores it. Her husband needs her.

MARY

Dear Mister and Mrs Page..

The pain from what might be the beginning of a small
contraction. She controls her breathing, comes through the
pain, and resumes her duties:

MARY (CONT'D)

It is with great sadness that I
write to you..

123 INT. MARTIN FLAT. DAY. 123

JOE comes in. HONOR has made a huge effort to look fragrant
and lovely for her husband's return. She stands. This
couldn't be more inappropriate. He doesn't register her
fragrant loveliness.

JOE

I'm afraid the honeymoon is over.

He looks at her. His wife, for better and for worse. A long beat. He barely knows her..

JOE (CONT'D)

We barely know each other.

124 INT. LAITHWAITE FLAT. DAY.

124

ALISON rubbing her palms together. ED hasn't moved. She rubs harder. She stops. She looks down at the heather detritus at her feet and we realize that she's had the heather between her palms.

ED

The body will be taken from here to Steamer Point. It stays in the hospital morgue over night. In the morning..

ALISON is still again. Her grief is making her punctuate life differently - everything she does has a full stop after it before a new action.

ED (CONT'D)

In the morning... (he can't go on with this line) He was killed by weapons brought in through Little Aden. From Egypt..

ED struggling to keep his emotions under control. She can't know that it was her husband's deal with his informant that allowed the weapons in and that his guilt is overwhelming.

ED (CONT'D)

(Tremendous effort to get this out)
He would have died.. It would have been quick.

She stares at the deflowered heather stem in her hand.

125 EXT. BASE / MARRIED QUARTERS. DAY.

125

A coffin being carried to the back of an RAMC ambulance and placed on the floor of the vehicle. All the men apart from Joe are there looking on. There's no requirement to but the men form an impromptu guard of honour en route to the ambulance. They salute the coffin as it's carried past. All of the saluting hands are shaking; all the salutes are sustained; none of the men crack; all of them are as close to cracking as real men in 1965 ever get. From the married quarters behind them - the three women come out and stand together, looking on. ALISON takes two hopeless, faltering steps forwards as the doors are shut (the ambulance doors) on her dead love. HONOR looking for JOE - she can't see him; he's not there. MARY standing still, concentrating. The ambulance moves off.

ALISON's pain - a stifled, strangled howl. She manages to keep it silent. Then MARY bends over - the pain of a full blown contraction kicking in - and manages to keep almost silent a long, low moan. The men all turn and look at the three women. HONOR looks about her for her husband.

126 EXT. BASE / ENTRANCE CHECKPOINT. DAY. 126

JOE looks at the Union Jack being lowered to half mast.

127 EXT. BASE / ENTRANCE CHECKPOINT. DAY. 127

JOE approaching the perimeter just along from the main gate. He looks out at the desert and contemplates the scale of the task ahead. Is that a figure? Out there in the shimmering heat is that a person walking? Is Joe seeing things? The figure gets closer. The Lawrence of Arabia shot. As he comes into view Joe can see that the figure is limping and that he's using a stick and then, finally, that the figure coming towards him is Corporal Armstrong.

JOE

(To himself) Armstrong...

(Shouted) Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG approaches and stands (after a fashion, given his physical condition) to attention.

JOE (CONT'D)

You're late.

ARMSTRONG

Sir yes sir.

JOE

Very late.

ARMSTRONG

Yes sir.

JOE

Welcome home.

ARMSTRONG fighting back tears of relief. He salutes to stop himself from crying. JOE returns the salute.